The Capitol Hill Monitor

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District of Columbia

On Dec. 4 the District's Department of Fire & EMS received an extension from the FCC for its 800 MHz license. The license is for trunking the eight existing 800 MHz channels the department has used in the conventional mode for several years (852.6125, 852.6375, 852.6625, 852.6875, 852.7125, 852.7375, 852.7625 and 852.7875). The Motorola digital Astro trunked radio system, says the department's MIS director, Danny Weiss, is scheduled to be on-line no later than Dec. 31.

In another agreement, the District reclaimed some of the 800 MHz frequencies formerly licensed to the Office of Emergency Preparedness (OEP). Under the agreement, 10 of the 18 frequencies first licensed to the OEP in 1984 and 1985 will be reassigned to Howard County. The remaining eight frequencies will be re-licensed to the District. The frequencies are 855.2125, 855.2375, 855.4625, 856.2375, 856.7375, 856.9875, 857.2375, 857.7375, 857.9875, 858.2375, 858.7375, 858.9875, 859.2375, 859.7375, 859.9875, 860.2375, 860.7375 and 860.9875. The FCC requires that radio systems for both jurisdictions be operational by May 31.

The OEP had received three time extensions to build its trunked system. This time the District says it's serious. On Nov. 22 the Control Board authorized partial funding to construct the system and purchase radio equipment. The following day the city executed updated purchase orders to buy the system directly from Motorola. The city says it will issue the purchase order with this approval.

The completion date for the OEP system is scheduled for 2001. The District claims that restoration of the licenses for the stations will enable the OEP to carry out its public safety mission, permit replacement of OEP's "outdated and inadequate" radio system, and provide interoperability capability with other jurisdictions.

The District will consolidate construction of the fire and OEP trunked systems, but to what extent has yet to be determined. The primary users of the OEP system will likely include corrections, human services and public works. Thanks to Vince Destajo and Danny Weiss for keeping us posted on the District's progress.

TRUNKED SYSTEMS UPDATES

Manassas and Manassas Park

On the other side of the river, a single-site Motorola digital Astro system is now operational for Manassas and Manassas Park. This is the first Washington area jurisdiction, says Lee Williams, to make the switch to an Astro trunked radio system. Manassas still simulcasts its primary fire channel with 154.25. Frequencies for the system are: 866.0875, 866.1125, 867.875, 868.4 and 868.425.

Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority

MWAA's Motorola digital Astro system is coming on-line! MWAA's trunk is a three-site simulcast system with no planned analog component. The National Airport portion of the system, says Derek Kelly, MWAA radio systems administrator, became operational in test mode during November. Coverage testing begins this month. By the time you read this, MWAA's Dulles site should be operational. MWAA's third site at Tysons on Spring Hill near the Access Road should be operational about the same time.

In a few weeks the authority's existing VHF channels will start simulcasting the trunked system talkgroups. The trunked system will operate on 866.675, 866.925, 867.2, 867.4375, 868.2125, 866.8875, 867.35 and 867.4625.

MWAA radios will be programmed with police and fire talkgroups for Arlington County and Alexandria. Fairfax County will be added as soon as it comes on-line. All three jurisdictions will have MWAA talkgroups programmed in their Astro radios as they are procured.

All police and fire radios will have the national mutual aid channels (866.0125, 866.5125, 867.0125, 867.5125 and 868.0125) as well as the RINS (regional interservice) channels. The RINS channels, dubbed COG 1 through 6, are 868.5125, 866.8375, 867.2375, 867.4875, 866.8625 and 867.7625, respectively. Another 866 MHz channel, 866.3625, will eventu-

ally replace the UHF police mutual aid channel (453.55). All of these channels will operate conventionally in analog mode and employ a CTCSS of 156.7 Hz.

The MWAA trunk will have access to selected fire and law enforcement channels used by other jurisdictions via an elaborate patching configuration under developed. MWAA will be able to patch its digital talkgroups with channels used by the Washington Field Office of the Secret Service, US Park Police, State Department, DC Fire/EMS, Loudoun and Prince William county fire, fire mutual aid (154.265, 154.28 and 154.295) and other agreements are in the works. The target completion date for the system is the end of February.

Alexandria

Alexandria has over the last few months purchased new Motorola Astro digital-capable mobile and portable radios for police and fire. Many of the radios are installed but operate in the analog-mode only. The radios will be programmed to work with MWAA's digital system, Arlington County's analog and Fairfax County's digital system as it comes on-line. Full transition to digital is not expected to take place in Alexandria until around 2000.

Fairfax County

With the assistance of Ken Fowler, here is a rough timetable for trunked system implementation by Fairfax County. In February installation of radios will begin in non-emergency vehicles, including animal control, and by March the system will hopefully be installed so range testing can begin.

Antenna sites are planned for West Ox Road (Government Center), Great Falls (fire station 12), Lorton (DC's tower), Hybla Valley/Butts Corner and in Merriefield (Washington Gas). Disputes involving location of a couple tower sites could add delays. Installation of radios and mobile data computers (MDC) will begin in April. The county will complete installation of equipment in police vehicles first in order to free up the department's 800 MHz conventional channels which the trunked system will use. Herndon, Vienna and Fairfax City police have expressed an interest in joining the system.

The MDC system consists of Motorola's VRM-600 six-channel auto-switching UHF radio with a notebook PC running MDCS software under Windows 95 and will cost an estimated $10,221 per vehicle! Along with the radio/MDC installation, the ECC will begin installing new CAD software called ALTARIS. The installation of ALTARIS will take about 18 months.

Sometime this spring the current fire channels will start simulcasting the trunked system. The fire department will continue to use 460.575 indefinitely for pager activation and press monitoring. September is the target date for installation completion with final acceptance planned for October.

Selected radios will have telephone interconnect and cellular phones will remain in battalion chief and EMS vehicles. Cellular use is expected to be reduced since paramedics will be able to communicate directly with medical facilities over the trunked system. Telephone interconnect will also be available to selected trunked system users.

Each engine, truck and squad will receive two Motorola XTS-3000 hand-held radios. Medics, ambulances and chiefs get one hand-held. The radios will include talkgroups for EMS communication to hospitals, major incident coordination and mutual aid capability with all surrounding jurisdictions. The XTS-3000 radios will range an estimated $2725 to $2950 each. Mobiles will cost $2980.

Fire apparatus in Northern Virginia will be renumbered to facilitate mutual aid coordination. The goal is to assure that each fire station in Northern Virginia has a unique set of radio numbers that will automatically appear on the dispatcher's console when the radio transmitter is keyed. Phase-in to the new numbering system is anticipated to start this month and will eventually include all apparatus, fire stations, accountability passports, helmet and radio identifiers. The new radio designations will hopefully be in use as you read this. The proposed numbering scheme is as follows:

100's Arlington County
(currently 70 series)
200's Alexandria (currently 50 series)
300's Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority (old 62/64)
400's Fairfax County (including
Fairfax City and Ft Belvoir)
500's Prince William County
600's Loudoun County

The fascinating aspect of this proposal is that all six jurisdictions will eventually share the identical channel plan. The first digit of the three-digit station number determines the primary zone that the jurisdiction uses. Fire channels for Fairfax County, for example, which is assigned the 400 series designations, will be in zone 4, not only in Fairfax County fire radios, but in all fire radios of the participating jurisdictions.

Prince George's County

Improvements are taking place at repeater sites in Cheltenham and District Heights. This work is part of the county's public safety radio systems upgrade which, if funding permits, will result in an integrated 25-channel 494/865 MHz trunked radio system. The system will utilize Ericsson/GE's Enhanced Digital Access and Control System (EDACS) trunking technology and equipment. The end result will be seamless cross-band/cross-system trunking for public safety and other government users.

The county is purchasing $2600 MRK portable radios from Ericsson/GE to replace its aging cache of MPS radios. The radios are trunk-system upgradable at a cost of about $300 each. Trunking for the police department is still at least five years away. In the mean time, the police department will primarily distribute the new radios to the CID and administrative officers for use on the existing police channels.

Frequencies for the EDACS trunked system are 866.1000, 866.1875, 866.2375, 866.6000, 866.7875, 867.0875, 868.2375, 868.4625, 868.4875, 868.7625, 868.9625 and of course the existing 494-496 MHz channels. The control channels for the system are already operational on 866.6000 and 866.7875.

The Prince George's County Police Department is getting a new CAD/file management system from a company called Tiburon. As a result, the department is going to re-structure its reporting areas and beats. The changes must be completed by March 1 in order to keep up with the timeline for the July completion date. The police department is also working on a grant to get cellular-based MDTs in its cruisers.

Delaware

The First State still aims to be the first state to have a state-wide all-agency digital trunked radio system. Hopefully during the first quarter of this year, says Benjamin H. Miller, state police information technology chief, Delaware will finally begin converting New Castle and Kent counties to IMBE (the up and coming standard for digital modulation).

The state has approximately 800 users in New Castle County who are piloting the Motorola Astro VSELP system (an older proprietary digital format). To accommodate their need to continue to operate under VSELP, only seven of the 14 channels will be initially upgraded to IMBE to make a seamless transition for the users.

Since the Kent County system is now in place, the state plans to use it, rather than the New Castle County system, for IMBE testing. No users are on the Kent County system. Towers are under construction in Sussex County, the state's third and only other county and the last to be upgraded.

DSP has begun installing Astro mobile radios in police cruisers. These mobiles, however, are programmed with IMBE, so they will not operate until the conversion. Meanwhile, the number of pilot users for DSP has grown to approximately 60 radios, mostly portables, in New Castle County. Full system operation in New Castle County is anticipated later this year.

The legacy VHF high band systems will, in all likelihood, continue to operate for a year or more. The state has to do this until all units downstate are converted. Otherwise, should a major incident require police assistance from down south, for example, those cars and officers would be unable to communicate without Astro radios. Fire departments will continue to simulcast operations because of the abundance of tone-activated receivers.

Each police agency within the state will make its own decisions as to how long their conventional systems will simulcast trunked system talkgroups. DSP hasn't made any decision on this yet. DSP is considering interfacing selected trunked talkgroups with the agency's website to allow monitoring even though the simulcast is expected to continue for some time.

The department is also considering allowing commercial broadcast and print media to have their own Astro portable or mobile, if they wish to purchase one. "We are aware of what other police agencies have done in this regard," Benjamin says, "and we are comparing notes."

Frequencies are as follows: New Castle County (866.2375, 866.4875, 866.5625, 866.7250, 867.0375, 867.2125, 867.2375, 867.4875, 867.7125, 867.7375, 868.1375, 868.2125, 868.3875, 868.7125, 868.9375 and 868.9625); Kent County (866.075, 866.65, 866.675, 867.125, 867.65, 867.675, 867.95, 868.65, 868.75 and 868.9); and Sussex County (866.1, 866.3625, 867.0875, 867.35, 867.6, 867.8375, 868.0875, 868.1125, 868.35 and 868.5875). The five national calling channels listed in the MWAA section will also be available.

DSP began testing mobile data terminals in 1995. The department

concluded that the computers could save an estimated 13,200 hours of police work a year, the equivalent of seven troopers. The use of mobile data terminals in police vehicles has resulted in more than 500 traffic and criminal arrests in the past year. Delaware now has plans to place cellular-based computers in all 260 of its cruisers.

SCANNING THE NEW SPORTS COMPLEXES

Along with the recent boom in sports complexes in the Washington area comes new listening opportunities. We were fortunate to have one of our own, Mike Peyton, on hand for opening night at the MCI Center.

Mike used the auto-log feature on his AR-8000 with no antenna to find strong signals while searching 461-465 and then 465-470 MHz. He checked each range for at least an hour. Frequencies marked with a "*" appeared to be used within the complex. Other frequencies may have been used by others nearby or were likely just intended for opening night. District EMS crews use 852.6875 and the DC police operate on 460.275 and 465.0 during events at the MCI Center.

MCI CENTER
461.0750r * MCI Center?
461.1500
461.2625
461.2625?
461.2750r * MCI Center, maint, media relations?
461.4250
461.5250r * MCI 2, 9
461.7000r *
461.9000?
462.0125
462.2750?
462.5750
462.8375
462.8375?
463.5375
463.7125
463.7375?
463.8500
464.1500
464.3250
464.3750
464.5000s * MCI "Events Group" (kiosk techs, F8?), opening only
464.5500 * MCI Center (also check 469.55)
464.5750
464.8625
464.8875r *
467.9250
468.6750
468.8250
469.7125

On the other side of town, the airwaves near the Redskins' new stadium are loaded with activity as well. With a complete season already under our belts, we've been able to compile these findings.

During recent games, county police officers made reference to the covert surveillance channels while watching scalpers selling forged tickets. Try scanning between 500.0 and 501.0 MHz. These are also occasionally used within the stadium as well.

COOKE STADIUM
47.2000s [94.8] State Highway Crews
461.0750r [047] Maintenance
461.1500r [116] Admin
461.9500r [071] Security
463.2375s [054] Not confirmed
463.2625s [???] Not confirmed
463.3125r [???] Redskins Helmet Radios (not confirmed)
463.8000r [072] Parking/Traffic Control
464.1000r [114] Maintenance
464.8500r [054] CH4 Guest Svcs (mentioned CHs 1/5)
494.7375-[127.3] PGPD CH8; interior
494.8875-[127.3] PGPD CH6; outside/traffic
495.0625-[127.3] PGFD CH4/6; fire/EMS

Some frequencies that are common to both complexes include Metro Transit Police (161.385) and bus supervisors (496.6125). And don't forget the traffic media, Metro (455.9125), Shadow (450.2375) and SmarTraveler (463.25). If you make it to any sporting event, please take along your scanner and let us know what you hear!

LISTEN TO PG/DC FIRE ON THE 'NET

Thanks to two local fire departments, Internet Real Audio listeners finally have some scanner radio audio to monitor from the Washington area. The two sites provide simulcasts of the primary fire channels for the District (154.19) and Prince George's County (494.8375/494.6625).

Both require Real Audio player software which can be downloaded for free from http://www.real.com/50/index.html. Once installed, point your browser to the Hyattsville Volunteers On-line site at http://www.hyattsvillevfd.org/ or the Riverdale Volunteer Fire Department's site at http://www.riverdalevfd.org/

Contact Dave J. Iannone (diannone@erols.com) for more details.

OPEN CHANNEL BBS ASSUMES FREQUENCY FORUM'S ROLE

As you are probably aware, the Frequency Forum BBS, which served Washington area radio hobbyists and scanner enthusiasts for more than six years, ceased operating in October. During the past two years, says Frequency Forum's sysop Jack Anderson, the system experienced a drastic decline in usage, probably a result of users spending more time on the Internet. This low level of interest and usage, he adds, did not justify the continued expense and effort involved in running the system.

Frank Carson, who runs the Open Channel BBS in Clinton, is providing a local online home to the few remaining Frequency Forum users. Open Channel's number is 301-203-8478 with a top modem speed of 14.4. The BBS is an official site for RIME networked conferences. It's all free, with no donations or contributions accepted, except those that involve suggestions, file contributions, etc.

Our thanks to Jack for his years of hard work and dedication and to Frank for continuing the tradition.

UPGRADING THE BLADENSBURG MOBILE COMMAND UNIT

It's hard to imagine that a small suburban town would have ever become the home of the region's best equipped mobile command unit. Volunteers at the Bladensburg Volunteer Fire Department & Rescue Squad have ambitious plans. It'll take about two weeks this month, says Scott Glazer, ECU-9 communications officer, to remodel and install what will probably become the largest mobile arsenal of radios in the region.

The 45-foot 26,000-pound vehicle, known as Emergency Command Unit 9 (or ECU-9), is available to respond to emergency scenes that require extensive on-scene coordination. ECU-9 provides a comfortable and functional operating environment where incident commanders can monitor the situation and plot strategy. Unlike the county's mobile command vehicle, ECU-9 is not restricted to a particular jurisdiction of operation. It played a major role in coordinating on-scene communication after the MARC-Amtrac train disaster and Metro has recently designated the unit as its official mobile command unit.

Here's a look at the radio equipment ECU-9 will be outfitted with in coming weeks: seven Motorola Spectra radios (secure VHF, two for UHF federal band trunking, UHF and UHF-T, and two Astro-capable for 800 MHz trunking); two Motorola Syntor-X 9000's, Motorola VHF Maratrac, UHF Maxtrac, Motorola Radius mobiles (VHF/UHF), UHF-T GE Ranger, UHF-T Ritron, MIEMSS med radio, aircraft radio and dual-band amateur radio. But wait, there's more! ECU-9 will also carry an assortment of portable radio equipment including a dozen or so Bendix Kings, GPS, Motorola VHF HT1000 and a 25-watt Maxon UHF repeater is coming soon.

Scott estimates the department has spent between $250,000 and $300,000 on the truck which was designed by Lynch Diversified Vehicles. The only other vehicle which comes close to it, he says, is the command unit at Pax River, which was based on ECU-9's specifications.

It's like building a cathedral or any masterpiece --the construction takes years and seems to never end. The department seeks equipment donations, such as a satellite phone, to allow them landline communication in areas where the local phone system may be inoperable. Also needed are people who have expertise in obtaining applicable government grants. If you can help, or want more information, try e-mailing Scott at: radioinstl@aol.com

SCANNING FOR POACHERS

by Ralph Johnson
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During the early morning on Dec. 13 I monitored a couple of poachers hunting deer at Sugarloaf Mountain, between Germantown and Frederick. Sugarloaf Mountain is private property and a registered historical site operated by Stronghold, Inc. Though private, the public may enjoy the scenery and hike, bike, walk or ride horseback on trails. Quite often as I ridge-run the trails I carry both my Pro-26 scanner and my two-meter rig.

While running that day I had my Pro-26 scan some preset frequencies, one of which was the frequency for the Germantown Target store, 151.625. The elevation of Sugarloaf, of course, enhances reception from both Montgomery and Frederick counties. As I was running, the scanner locked onto somebody whispering. At first I thought it was

somebody at a store trying to be funny without identifying themselves.

But then I heard it again and decided to lock on when they next transmitted. When I locked onto 151.625, I realized it was somebody talking to his partner about hunting deer. The men discussed in hushed tones how many deer to take, what to do with them and their hunting stand. They were talking low so they wouldn't chase deer away with their voices.

By that point I was near my car and decided to drive to the top of Sugarloaf to improve my reception. When I got to the West View Overlook parking lot their signal had really improved. Although the hunters could have been off the Stronghold property, I think they were on the property because of the way the signal strength improved. They did not identify as being on somebody else's property and they maintained good operations security by not identifying themselves by name.

I reported this to Stronghold personnel who told me the following: While the men could have been poachers, Stronghold employees can't patrol the whole area. The poachers could have been off the property, and could be well camouflaged and hard to spot. The person did appreciate my report. I was lucky. The poachers just happened to use a frequency I was scanning by coincidence. I was also lucky because they could have thought I was a deer wearing a white sweatsuit and taken a pot-shot at me.

I would have liked to had direction-finding capability with me. I will in the future. I won't have it running through the woods but I will have it in my car. Also I will have a broad band FM receiver that will search the band and give me a better chance of hearing somebody like this. The next day, Dec. 14, I scanned as I ran again but didn't hear anything on 151.625.

Stronghold--Sugarloaf is private property that the public is allowed on to for recreation. I go there to ridge-run, rock climb and monitor. As a result, I am concerned about access to public and private areas. Behavior such as this could ruin my and other's access to these areas where we go to enjoy the outdoors.

Inexpensive low power two-way radios are becoming increasingly more popular (and affordable) for recreational activities. You'll commonly find such radios on one of these 45 frequencies:
151.625, 151.655, 151.685, 151.715, 151.805, 151.835, 151.895, 151.925, 151.955, 154.49, 154.515, 154.54, 154.57, 154.6, 158.4, 462.5625, 462.575, 462.5875, 462.6125, 462.625, 462.6375, 462.6625, 462.675, 462.6875, 462.7125, 464.325, 464.5, 464.55, 464.825, 467.5625, 467.5875, 467.6125, 467.6375, 467.6625, 467.6875, 467.7125, 467.7625, 467.8125, 467.85, 467.875, 467.9, 467.925, 469.2625, 469.5 and 469.55.

TANDY SERVICE MANUAL FIASCO CONTINUES

Company Says Service manuals okay without schematics

Last year Radio Shack decided to no longer sell service manuals for scanners that could be modified to receive cellular signals. Tandy has apparently changed that policy. A memo, recently issued to company reps, explains the revised policy: "Radio Shack is restricting the dissemination of schematics on the 800 to 900 MHz scanner products. Due to recent proceedings in the US Congress and at the Federal Communications Commission, and because of proprietary concerns, please do not offer nor provide schematics for these devices outside the company."

"Scanners that were submitted for FCC certification after April, 1997, that can receive frequencies 800 MHz or above," the memo continues, "will have the schematics withheld [from the public]. This includes the following models: 20-417, 20-430, 20-512, 20-520 and all future service manuals within the stated criteria. If the service manual exists and is in stock, for scanners that can receive 800 MHz or above that were submitted for FCC certification before May, 1997 [then the manual] will continue to be available to customers and others."

Schematics for scanners not receiving the 800 MHz frequencies will continue to be available. "Modified scanners," the memo warns, "will not be serviced by Tandy."

PUBLICATION ANNOUNCEMENT

If you're a serious collector of law enforcement badges, the 148-page State Police & State Highway Patrol Badge Guide may be just what you need! The soft-cover book, which includes 300 photos, is devoted to the current and most recent state police badges. The book sells for $25 (plus $3 priority mail shipping). For more details or to purchase a copy, write William Mauldin Pro-

ductions, Inc., P.O. Box 49944, Greensboro, NC 27419 or http://www.mauldin.net. Bill, the former editor of the RCMA Scanner Journal, is well known for his years of dedication to our hobby.

SCANNERS FOR SALE

Larry Cordell has a cellular-restored 200-channel Pro-39 with hyperscan for sale for $100. He is also selling a 16-channel Cobra SR-900 scanner for $40, a 20-channel Pro-508 for $50 and a 10-channel Regency M-100 for $25. The Pro-39 is a handheld and the others are table-top units. Call 301-694-0864 or page him, 301-698-6668, for details.

NEWSSCAN

NAT'L GUARD HELOS ASSIST DC POLICE. Those who monitor D.C. police occasionally may have heard the DC Army National Guard helicopters providing limited assistance. The Guard has been providing this support since 1989, but has recently become more active, flying three to five nights a week. The helicopters use the call sign "RAID" when contacting the DC NG joint operations center ("Tiger 30") on 161.0 (no, it isn't a typo, 161.0 with an input of 158.0).

The helicopters involved, says the Belvoir Eagle, are from the Reconnaissance and Interdiction Detachment (RAID) of Company B, 1st Battalion, 132nd Aviation, DC Army National Guard at Davison Army Airfield. They are one of 33 such Army National Guard detachments nationwide. The helicopters are OH58A Cayuse and are equipped with a thermal imaging system that can "film" temperature variations as small as a half degree Fahrenheit. The system is mounted primarily under the helicopter and operated using a joy-stick type device.

Each helicopter has a 350-channel programmable Wulfsberg radio system. They generally operate over the city at an altitude of about 500 feet --a height that does not violate the civil rights of people who may be filmed. Often they carry an MPD officer on board the aircraft as well. RAID helicopters are only permitted, by federal law, to support anti-drug operations, and must be in response to a specific request from law enforcement. The unit is, however, able to assist law enforcement in search and rescue missions, prisoner escapee searches and civil emergencies.

POLICE EMBRACE WIRELESS DATA. The use of mobile data products by law enforcement has gained such rapid acceptance across the country during 1996 that it may be emerging as the most popular current application of wireless data technology, according to wireless data carriers and vendors. Cellular Digital Packet Data networks, reports the Dec. 1 Radio Communications Report, have experienced increased interest by police departments that have purchased software packages allowing them to use the wireless networks in their daily law enforcement duties.

Using various software systems in conjunction with the CDPD network, officers can check for warrants or stolen vehicle information, confirm vehicle registration, determine the vehicle's primary owner by name and retrieve the driver's license information. One of the more popular software products created to support law enforcement functions is PacketCluster Patrol, a mobile data system made by Cerulean Technology Inc. About 250 police agencies in 37 states use the service. A Bell Atlantic Mobile spokesperson estimated that about one-third of all police departments now using the company's CDPD network signed up in the last year. The Philadelphia Police Department was the first major city police agency to join.

BNN PLEADS GUILTY TO INTERCEPTING PAGER MESSAGES. Breaking News Network pleaded guilty on Nov. 20 to charges of illegally intercepting private pager messages, the New York Times reported. BNN also entered a guilty plea to charges of manufacturing and possessing devices that illegally intercepted pager communications. The charges were unusual enough that the Federal magistrate who presided at the hearing in which the three executives pleaded guilty, said, "We don't get this type of case often." Later he asked the defendants whether BNN was a network that he could "hear on the radio or see on television." He was told by one of the BNN co-owners that it was not. "It is broadcast on pagers."

Both co-owners and the company's manager each pleaded guilty to two misdemeanor counts and each could face a total of one year in prison and a fine of up to $10,000 when sentenced later this year. Charges are pending against Jeffrey R. Moss, who was also accused of intercepting pages. The company could be fined as much as $500,000. None of the men would speak publicly about the case.

SECURE ALPHA PAGERS? A Germantown firm says it has a way to make pagers more secure. V-One Corp.'s Air SmartGate is in final development, says the Sept. 15 Radio Communications Report. The

system uses public/private key encryption, meaning that messages are encrypted with both a public encryption key, which many people may have access to, and a private encryption key, which only the message's recipient knows. Only with both keys will the encrypted message be translated.

When a page is sent to a secure pager, the information is encrypted and sent to the customer's on-site Air SmartGate server, where the message is then decrypted with the server's public key and routed to the network operating center by a TCP-based protocol. Then the message is re-encrypted and sent to the page's destination. An organization that has 1,000 pagers use would spend about $3,000 more per month for the protection, V-One estimates, though final pricing was not available at press time.

HACKERS HACK WHITE HOUSE ALPHA PAGERS. The Internet posting featuring April 27 pager messages to President Clinton's Secret Service detail, warns the Sept. 29 Radio Communications Report, is "testament to a problem that could become a major public relations predicament for analog wireless carriers that could hurt their bottom line." The reason some analog service providers haven't integrated encryption technology is presumably the same reason White House spokesman Joe Lockhart gave for not securing the presidential Secret Service pager: money.

That the White House is so nonchalant about pager privacy (Lockhart says White House employees are instructed upon receiving pagers not to communicate sensitive information over them because it could be intercepted) is somewhat out of sync with its encryption policy that is driven by law enforcement and national security concerns.

Emmanuel Goldstein of 2600 Hacker Quarterly was featured on the Sept. 18 edition of ABC's World News Tonight. "This is pager traffic concerning the President of the United States when he was in Philadelphia last April," Goldstein boasted. "The pagers were transmitting all kinds of data as to where he was, where he was going, who was on the phone, what their plans were. All wide open, in the clear." The White House says no sensitive information is transmitted over its pagers. But a retired Secret Service agent disagreed. From the transcripts, the agent observed, "the information is arrivals and departures, locations, support activity related to the events, the people involved in that support activity."

TOWER MORATORIA NO MORE. Adding its voice to that of the Cellular Telecommunications Industry Association (CTIA), a few months ago the Personal Communications Industry Association (PCIA) called on the FCC "to preempt state and local moratoria [temporary prohibitions] on tower siting that bar entry into the wireless communications marketplace." PCIA wants an end to open-ended moratoria, any single moratoria or cumulative moratoria extending beyond 90 days and any moratoria based on radio-frequency emission concerns.

The FCC, writes Editor Don Bishop in the November Mobile Radio Technology, has "shown reluctance to preempt state authority in certain matters, partly because federal courts sometimes scrutinize preemptions carefully and may overturn them. Once upon a time, though," Bishop points out, "the FCC was reluctant to regulate the frequency coverage of radio receivers, and it managed to reform its ways on that matter at the histrionic urging of CTIA."

His editorial continues, "Maybe CTIA and PCIA together can cause the FCC to reform its ways once again and override state and local government authority. Maybe. Scanner hobbyists don't have access to taxpayer money to pay for the defense of their interests. State and local governments do. That's what you want to see, isn't it? Your state and local tax dollars being used to pay lawyers to fight other lawyers paid by your federal tax dollars in a court supported by your tax dollars."

HOUSE SUBCOMMITTEE REWRITES ANTI-SCANNER BILL. On Oct. 29 the House telecommunications subcommittee revised HR 2369, the "Wireless Privacy Enhancement Act of 1997." The bill's primary purpose is to protect consumers from being monitored by scanner listeners. The latest version of the bill, writes contributing editor Bennett Kobb in the Nov. 13 TR Wireless News, is "somewhat less draconian than the first draft. Nonetheless, it appears to duplicate existing law, directs the FCC to consider matters it already has resolved, assigns the Commission new enforcement duties without additional funding, and declares much of the radio spectrum illegal to 'intentionally' receive."

"Given these defects," he writes, "any real privacy enhancement it could deliver would be a remarkable bonus." The bill would make it illegal to modify equipment in any manner that causes it to fail to comply with FCC regulations, something which the 1934 Communications Act already does.

HR 2369 would force the FCC to deny permission to sell any scanner that can receive, or can be modified to receive, cellular or personal communications service (PCS) frequencies. "The original draft," he notes, "forbade coverage of all commercial mobile radio service (CMRS) frequencies. That proposal attracted outcry and disbelief from users across the spectrum, because it would have made the manufacture and use of ordinary scanners impractical" since CMRS frequencies encompass numerous radio services.

The original draft of the bill made "introduction of limits on shortwave radio coverage a startling, unprecedented possibility." The revised version only applies to scanner coverage of cellular and PCS but includes a loophole that could limit scanner coverage of CMRS frequencies that are shared by public safety users.

The bill also forbids scanners from decoding encrypted signals, digital cellular, PCS, non-published or disclosed alphanumeric paging or SMR transmissions. "The alphanumeric paging provision of the bill is also hard to understand," he observes: "Inexpensive devices that decode alphanumeric paging transmissions are on the open market. But these decoders only work with published and disclosed signal formats. They therefore would be lawful under the new version of the bill --making one wonder what the bill's authors were trying to accomplish."

Currently it is not a violation to merely intercept a radio signal, he points out. "The information must be divulged or used for gain to violate existing law." But this bill could make "intentional" interception a violation (broadcasting, distress calls and ham or citizens band are exempt). A higher standard than "willful," Kobb writes, "intentional" interception suggests focused surveillance, and perhaps recording and acting upon a victim's communications, instead of innocent scanning of a wide range of frequencies. Whether courts will recognize this distinction remains to be seen.

Finally, he adds, the bill requires the commission to consider warning labels on scanners that warn users of prohibitions in federal law on intentionally intercepting or divulging radio communication. In 1989 the commission decided that it was "impractical for a single label to provide sufficient information to properly advise users of the legal requirements" and that a "warning label, by calling attention to a prohibited activity, might encourage it." The commission decided then that labels were unnecessary and little has changed since.

INTERCEPTED GINGRICH CELL PHONE CALL MAY LEAD TO CIVIL LAWSUIT. House Republican Conference Chairman John Boehner (R-Ohio), reports the Nov. 17 Radio Communications Report, says he plans to sue Rep. Jim McDermott (D-Wash.) and perhaps others, charging them with violating the federal telecom privacy law with regard to the cellular phone call intercepted by John and Alice Martin that proved politically embarrassing to GOP leaders. The only thing reportedly holding Boehner back is the question of legal costs. He has asked the House ethics committee whether he can dip into campaign funds to defray legal expenses of a civil suit.

"While a Florida couple [the Martins] has admitted to illegally intercepting and recording the conversation and a Department of Justice inquiry continues, I am concerned that my rights in this matter will be prejudiced by the current pace and direction of the criminal investigation," said Boehner in a Nov. 7 letter to the House ethics committee. "Because of these concerns, I have decided to retain legal counsel to assess and pursue any and all civil remedies against any and all persons who engaged in conduct which individually, and/or through a conspiracy, violated the ECPA (Electronic Communications Privacy Act)."

Boehner has written Attorney General Janet Reno several times this year, but only recently heard back from Assistant Attorney General Andrew Fois that the investigation was ongoing. A spokesperson for Boehner said McDermott would be the prime target of a lawsuit but that others, such as James Cole, a Washington, D.C., lawyer who assisted the House ethics panel's probe of House Speaker Newt Gingrich (R-Ga.), also could be named as a defendant. Whether the New York Times, which printed verbatim excerpts of the cell phone transcript that some believe was provided to the paper by McDermott, can also be held liable is unclear.

EAVESDROPPING NEIGHBOR SENDS LOVERS' SECRETS TO CHEATED WIFE. "A radio ham," writes the Nov. 28 Daily Telegraph, "intercepted his next door neighbor's telephone calls with her married lover, tape-recorded them and sent them to the man's wife." Yuonne Davison, 60, said that when she and her lover, Bill Lichfield, 67, arranged meetings, his wife Doreen always seemed to be "one step ahead of us." The recordings were produced as evidence in his subsequent divorce. Mrs. Davison's neighbor, Vernon Pearson, a retired postman,

admits he eavesdropped on her calls but says he was acting within the law.

Mrs. Davison, whose husband died six years ago, believes Mr. Pearson, 72, started monitoring her calls shortly after she bought a cordless telephone in March 1994 for her apartment in South Shields, South Tyneside, England, and around the time that she started the affair. Mrs. Davison said: "Bill was giving his solicitor instructions over the phone. Vernon was taping the conversation and sending the tape on to Doreen. Every time we went to court she was prepared for everything that could be thrown at her and was armed with evidence.

"Vernon was sending tapes to other people I had talked about on the phone too. A close friend refuses to speak to me now because of the tapes sent to her. "I was a nervous wreck because I was worried about who I might have had a go at on the phone." Mrs. Davison claimed that police investigating malicious calls to her and Mr. Lichfield told her that Mr. Pearson had been taping her conversations. "They raided his flat and found a pile of transcripts," she said.

She was told by British Telecom that there were no grounds for them to bring a prosecution because a scanner was not used and the line was not tapped. She said: "I want to warn people about the dangers of these phones because you are not safe. I feel violated. He knows everything about me--how I like my sex, my financial status, the lot." Mrs. Davison said of Mr. Pearson: "This man doesn't think he has done anything wrong. I see him in the street and he smirks at me."

SCOTTISH POLICE CATCH ILLEGAL SCANNER LISTENERS. Police in Eastbourne Scotland nabbed people illegally monitoring their radio messages by staging a fake flying saucer sighting. According to the Sept. 13 Daily Mail, officers had requested assistance at a remote location where a UFO was apparently preparing to land. Reinforcements were requested to the scene after a patrol car had confirmed sightings of strange bright lights descending from the clouds. "It's amazing, they're different colors, swirling... I've never seen this before. They're getting closer," one patrolman said over the radio.

Within minutes, 15 cars full of police radio eavesdroppers and UFO seekers were speeding through the night, wanting to know if the truth really was out there. The rotating blue, orange, red and yellow lights grew brighter as they drove up the winding road toward the final bend at Butts Brown on the South Downs in East Sussex. But there were no little green men or men in black waiting for them --just the boys in blue, who had concocted an elaborate hoax. Officers searched their cars and confiscated scanning equipment used to listen in on police frequencies, while overhead, bright lights continued to hover as officers aimed their halogen lamps at the sky in an attempt to fool more people who had been scanning the airwaves. An Eastbourne police officer said many of those tricked by the false alert, last March, were too stunned to speak. "They couldn't believe they'd been set up." Police confiscated and destroyed two scanners.

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Please address all correspondence to Alan. We encourage readers to submit material and write articles that relate to the hobby. All submissions are subject to editing for style and content. When submitting material please make certain we can contact you should we have any questions. We welcome frequency and visitor requests, but please include a reply envelope.

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Join Local Scanner Enthusiasts On-Line!

We encourage computer users to take part in discussions on Frank Carson's Open Channel computer BBS (301-203-8478) or subscribe to the Scan-DC listserv by sending an e-mail to majordomo@grove.net with the words "subscribe scan-dc" (no quotes) as the message.

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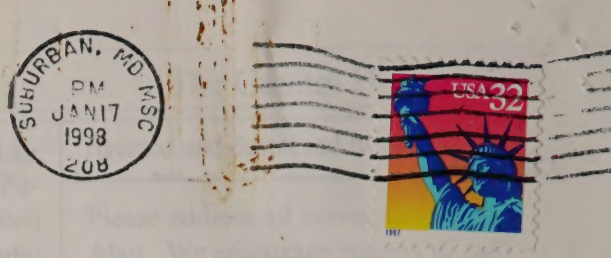

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